## PEAKS OF SHALA

He filled our glasses with red wine. "You must not mistake my people," he said. "The blood feud is bad, very bad, but it is their only way of enforcing laws, which are, in general, admirable. 628 619

"The blood feud is not a lawless thing, as strangers sometimes think. Nor has it anything to do with personal strife or hate. It is a form of capital punishment, such as all nations have, and it is governed by most strict laws.

"You must remember that in these mountains we have never been conquered by foreign governments. The Roman Empire claimed to have overpowered Albania, it is true, as later the Turks did, but neither Rome nor Constantinople was able to send its government into these mountains. The people live as they did before the days of Greece, except for the influence of the Church. It is a simple, communistic society, [181] without private property or any organized government. The only law is the moral law, enforced by tradition, by custom, and by common consent. The father of the family becomes the chief of the tribe, but he has no power that conflicts with the moral law, the ancient Law of Lec. There is a tradition that all this group of tribes [173] was once, long ago, given this moral law by a man named Lec, but that is doubtless a myth added to through the ages.

"This Law of Lec is based on personal honor, which is also the honor of the tribe. A man or a tribe must punish an insult to honor by killing

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



people, too, had their part, for they formed the permanent garrison of the key to the Adriatic. Once again, as so often in the past, the rival nations vied with one another to secure the friendship or compel the obedience of the Albanians; and they, owning no common allegiance, took sides and changed them in accordance with the dictates of interest and the counsels of opportunity. Thus the situation in Albania came to reflect, as in a mirror, the true relations between the Powers, obscured to the general view by the smoke of battle blown before the wind of words.

The policies of nations devolve in the last instance upon individuals; and in this, as in past struggles, lone men went out among the Albanian mountaineers to make their local feuds subserve the divergent and often inconsistent purposes of the strategists and statesmen who had sent them forth. Of these men I was one; and of a part of what I saw this is the tale.

## 2

THE Albanians are a distinct people, not perhaps a nation, but remarkable by the strength of their sense of nationality. Archaeologists believe the two main branches of their race — the Ghegs and Tosks, whom the river Shkumbi divides — to be descended from the ancient Illyrians and Pelasgians. These peoples, perhaps the earliest Aryan invaders of the Balkans, may once have inhabited the whole region between the Danube and the Aegean and Adriatic seas; but successive waves of invasion have worn them down by assimilation or massacre, and only a remnant survive in the land known as Albania.

This land, the exact boundaries of which have fluctuated with the fortunes of the Albanians and their conquerors, forms a wedge between the massif of Montenegro and the Pindus range. It consists of a rich but malarial coastal plain, in which lie the two harbours of Durazzo and Valona, and a mountainous interior; an extension of the Dinaric Alps. In contrast, however, to the bare and arid Karst of Dalmatia, the Albanian mountains are thickly wooded and convulsed out of their former

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



symmetry into a tangle of high and broken ranges. The valleys they enclose are narrow but fertile, and from them powerful streams pursue their twisted courses down to the Adriatic.

Albania has many times been overrun in the strife of empires for the control of the Straits of Otranto; and it is in the almost inaccessible fastnesses of the interior rather than in the rich coastal plain that the remnant of the Illyrians have made their homes. There they have found freedom; for, so wild and rugged are the mountains, and so poor the prospect of wealth which they offer, that none of Albania's conquerors have attempted to rule them except in name.

To this day the majority of the Albanians live in the mountains; but at different times — when the growth of population in the highlands has pressed too hard upon the means of subsistence, or when political conditions have been favourable — families have moved down to the plains or to the towns. Thus, in the seventeenth century, under the protection of Islam, the tribesmen of the North flowed back into the Kossovo. But the trend has been a slow one; for the Albanians prize freedom above all else, and many that have descended to the plains have returned again to the mountains. The plains are rich, but, as the malaria saps a man's strength, so work on the big estates destroys his independence, and submission to the laws of the conqueror corrupts his soul. Thus the lowlands have ever been the province of the foreign overlord, and it is in the mountains, beyond the reach of invaders and guarded by the armed might of the clans, that the moral and material strength of Albania resides.

The steep and rugged mountains, the deep and pathless forests, the drifts of snow in winter, and the spate of the rivers in spring and autumn have preserved the Albanians from foreign conquerors. But these obstacles to communications, which have so often turned back hostile armies, have operated powerfully against the growth of a centralised Albanian state. Geography has thus combined with contending foreign Powers to promote disunity among the Albanians. The ancient Illyrian and Pelasgian kingdoms were seldom even allied, and, under the Turkish Empire, the country was divided for political and

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



662 services" from the Central Government or from foreign Powers. Nor were the chiefs the only ones to gain, for the profits of a mercenary leader depend on the strength of his following. The rival chieftains competed for the support of the smaller fry; and these passed in and out of the orbits of their betters according to their hopes of wealth or fears of defeat. Thus in time the foreign gold circulated down to the poorest shepherd.

Such practices were lucrative and naturally congenial to the Albanians; for they despised manual labour as a task for women, regarding only fighting and its preparations as man's work. Mercenary enterprise, moreover, was conducive to social stability, for the chief derived his wealth not from the exploitation of his clansmen but from the subsidies of the foreigner or the spoils of war. A common interest in his success induced a spirit of partnership among his followers, while the fierce competition of rivals encouraged his liberality or corrected his avarice. At the same time each accession of strength which he derived from his foreign paymasters was almost automatically balanced by the complementary reinforcement of his rivals by other foreign Powers. Mercenary enterprise thus proved to be an expanding economy; and, to guard against the dangers of a slump, the rival chiefs were not above stimulating the flow of subsidies by timely collusion.

The Albanians were of the Balkans; and so the natural insecurity of their lives, inherent in the anarchy and poverty of their circumstances, was aggravated, if at times enriched, by the struggle of the Powers to spread their influence along the road to the East. Life under such conditions could not but be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"; yet from its very grimness the Albanians drew their strength. Anarchy developed their independence, not only in their relations to other men, but in their thoughts; for they were free from all those prejudices, taboos, and inhibitions which limit the outlook of those who belong to an organised community. Poverty lent a severe pragmatism to their thought, so that they judged only by results, knowing that, if man cannot live by bread alone, he cannot even subsist without it. Insecurity sharpened their awareness and deepened their understanding of human nature, trying their values by the acid test of survival.

• 181

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trying their values by the acid test of survival. Nor were they isolated from the world around them; for the tides of invasion that swept through their valleys, and the cross-currents of foreign intrigue which penetrated into their mountains continually refreshed them with new ideas. Some of them, moreover, travelled to the ends of the earth in the service of their conquerors, to act, on their return, as a ferment among their fellow countrymen. Likewise the three religions which they honoured — the Roman Catholic, the Orthodox, and the Moslem — were powerful vehicles for the spread of foreign influences, whether from Pope or Patriarch or Sheikh-Ul-Islam.

These religions represented traditional loyalties rather than living creeds to the Albanians. Indeed religious devotion and ideological fervour were alike alien to them, being based on social concepts inapplicable to the anarchy in which they lived. In the past, when politics had been conducted under the sign of religion, they had freely apostatised to secure material advantage. Likewise, in our time, they variously proclaimed themselves Fascists, Communists, or Democrats, in obedience to the calculations of interest rather than to the dictates of conviction. The growth among them of the Bektashi sect suggested that, left to themselves, their religious instinct might have developed towards some form of Pantheism, perhaps in the tradition of the Oracle of Dodona and the hierarchy of gods which Hellas inherited from the ancient Illyrians. Instead, the contemplation of the endless struggle for survival and power which characterised every phase of their daily life induced in them an all-pervading materialism. In ideas they discerned but the banners under which forces are gathered; and they mistrusted words as a cloak for intentions rather than as a means for their expression.

Politics they understood instinctively, for the relations between the Great Powers were daily made manifest to them in terms of golden coin and leaden shot. Besides, where there is no law, all human relationships are understood in terms of the struggle for power which underlies them and which is the very stuff of politics. The life of the clans was indeed a great school of *realpolitik*; and though the Albanians are few the fertility

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



[181] of their political genius is attested by the number of remarkable men of action which their race has given to the world. Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus of Epirus, the Köprülüs, Mehmet Ali of Egypt, Ali of Yannina, Condouriotis, Crispi, and Kemal Ataturk may justly be reckoned among them; not to speak of more than twenty Grand Viziers, and a host of Generals and politicians who served the empires of Macedon, Rome, and Turkey. Yet it is significant of the disunity and intractability of their nation that, although Albanians have often risen to rule empires, only twice in a thousand years — under Skanderbeg and under Zog; and then only with foreign support — has an Albanian ruled Albania.

The Albanians were thus remarkable as individuals rather than as a people, representative perhaps of the highest levels to which man can attain without submitting to the yoke and goad of a community. Their life was too harsh and their amenities too few to permit of any flowering of culture, but, though their circumstances were primitive beyond measure, yet they were [142] never barbarous. Their aquiline features and delicate hands were matched by a dignity of bearing and tolerance of outlook eloquent of the natural distinction of their race. Pyrrhus had called them *shkipetare*, or Sons of the Eagle, and their fierce and predatory natures well deserved the name. Keen of eye and cold of heart, they were bold in decision, but, like all mercenaries, unpredictable in battle. Freedom and vengeance were their ruling passions; and they lived without joy and died with reluctance rather than regret. Ungovernably proud, they were impatient of all restraint, utterly unteachable, deaf to appeals, suspicious of intentions, hard to lead, and impossible to drive; great gentlemen and great robbers, prizing honour above honesty, gold more than both and power beyond them all.

## 3

[142] THE independence of Albania was not achieved by the exertions of the Albanians: the mountaineers among them had never been other than independent, while the townsmen had wel-

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



669 and Yugoslavia. The condition of their country was one of relative prosperity; for the Italian occupation had enriched the people, while the recovery of the Kossovo had made supplies of food plentiful and cheap. At the same time the endemic poverty of the Albanians was such that, having little to lose and small hope of acquiring wealth by lawful means, they welcomed [181] disorder whenever it was attended by opportunities of plunder. To this natural lawlessness occasioned by their poverty was added a proud people's impatience of foreign rule. If the Italians had been less in evidence, their occupation might have been more easily tolerated. As it was, the Albanians bitterly resented the intrusions into their daily lives of the ubiquitous *carabinieri*, whose efforts to enforce order among a people accustomed to anarchy were as unpopular as they were vain.

Besides these general causes of discontent, the one inherent in the circumstances of the Albanians, the other in the character of their conquerors, there were other influences making for unrest of a more local, if no less important, application. In [184] North Albania the mercenary factor in the economy of the tribes made revolt a constant possibility. So rugged indeed was their region, and so complete the absence of social or political inhibitions among them, that the Ghegs could always be provoked to insurrection whenever the expectations of victory or gain appeared commensurate to the risks involved. In South Albania the causes of discontent were of a more usual character and sprang from the naturally conflicting interests of the landless peasants and the *Beys* whose estates they worked. The wretched lot of the Moslem peasantry might be somewhat alleviated by the sense of belonging to the same community as their masters; but the religious distinction which separated the Orthodox *rayah* from the Islamised landowners only served to increase their class consciousness. These Orthodox peasants had long been ripe for revolt; and indeed Fan Noli had sought to exploit their discontent in the revolution of 1924. Now, however, for the first time they found effective leaders in the youth of the towns.

177 668 The spread of Italian influence during the reign of King Zog had encouraged the growth of a new class of officials and

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



The Dibrans, like the men of Mati, lived an existence half pastoral, half agricultural, in which the tribalism of the mountains merged with the feudalism of the plains. They were a grim and calculating breed of men, a border people waging a ceaseless war with their Slav neighbours from Macedonia. The town of Dibra had been a rich centre of trade under the Ottoman Empire, but now it was shrunk to little more than a quarter of its former size. The fall of the Turk had perhaps interrupted the peaceful progress of commerce, but the struggle of the Powers for the control of Macedonia afforded the Dibran chiefs splendid opportunities for mercenary enterprise. For close on a century the rival nations had provided their clients among them with arms and subsidies; and so practised had the chiefs become in the technique of power politics that at any time the balance of power between the leading Dibran families reflected the exact relation between their foreign patrons. The ends which the Dibrans served were purely mercenary, but nevertheless they had learnt from experience the fundamental truth that freedom can only be preserved and wealth attained by the exercise of power. Moreover they understood, and this was perhaps the surest proof of their political genius, that it is not given even to the keenest brains to know with certainty where their interests lie. Each clan accordingly sought to reinsure against the imponderable factors in a situation by systematically placing a relative in each of the different political camps.

Dibra was said to hold five thousand rifles; but so divided were the Dibrans by local blood feuds and foreign intrigues that it seemed doubtful whether any clan could command the direct allegiance of more than five hundred men. The most powerful man in the region was Fikri Dine, once a henchman of King Zog. Fikri had led the rising of the Dibran clans in 1943: then he had routed the Italians and driven them out of Dibra city; but now, for fear of the Communists, he supported the Tirana Government. He came from a small clan and drew his power, not from the number of his rifles, but from his personal ascendancy over the bigger chiefs who had control of man-power. Like the chiefs of Mati they were torn by blood

4. 291 consists of caps that have been sewn on, as well as a bush of peacock's feathers and colored cock's feathers. (Compare Globus, volume 78, page 387). The carpet-aprons that are illustrated in Figure 5[1] likewise 4. 326 have their original provenience from the northeast. As is the rule throughout the Balkans, the silver ornamentation among the Bosnian South Slavs is rich and variegated. Especially filigree is forged with the greatest of artistic skill.

/97: Illustrations./

/98/ The Albanians

I.

000 1. Type of fortified building. 2. Hut in Durazzo. 3. Mountain hut near Gusinje. 4. and 5. Chairs. 6. Cradle from Planti. 7. Fireplace in Nikaj. 8. Interior of a hut in Pula with intertwined reed walls, and a roof consisting of rafters, reed, and bulrush bundles. 9. Fireplace and hearth bench in a niche of the wall, in Hotin. 10. House door in Brebula, with an ornament arched like a wedge, and hook-like stone projections used for hanging up the guns. 11. Interior of a fortified house (kula). 12. Fireplace with hearth bench and smoke outlet in the niche of the wall. 13. Carving on a chest from Scutari[2]

A. 101 Between Montenegro and Epirus the strongly mountainous coastal area of the Balkan Peninsula has preserved primitive European racial elements and maintained ancient cultural forms. Here the Albanian people is settled, the people of the Skyptars, the troglodytes or inhabitants of the land of the eagles or of the descendants of eagles, A. 144 according to the various explanations. By the Turks they are called Arnauts. From pre-Aryan Illyrians, who belong to the oldest inhabitants of the European-Asiatic land mass, and from Aryan Thracians there was formed a basic stock. To this were added Goths, Slavs, Greeks, and, since 1450, Turks, as well as sporadic Roman elements and later A. [197] Italian influxes along the coast. All these combined to form the Albanians who today are divided into two groups according to the dialects of their Indo-European language, that is, into the northern Gegen and A. 144 the southern Tuscans. These two groups are in turn divided into a great number of sub-stocks. The former, with predominantly Slavic, Serbian 191 blood, are tougher, more war-like, more conservative; the Tuscans,

1 [For illustrations, see 1: Karutz, E1 Europe, cat. 116, p. 67g --Analyst]
2 [See 1: Karutz, E1 Europe, cat. 116, p. 66a --Analyst]

181 on the other hand, are strongly mixed with Greeks and softer, more
144 accessible to civilizing influences, and more desirous of innovations. The consciousness of their racial coherence determines their life in tradition--they know their genealogical trees, and hundreds of names in them--, their boundless hospitality on the one hand, and their boundless desire for feuding and the implacability of their revenge
342 for murder, on the other hand. Of archaic methods of living there are to be found, as temporary living quarters, caves in naturally formed erosions of river banks, closed off in front by plaited mats of switches. Furthermore, there are conical huts made from unhewn stems and rushes left long in cutting, in the coastal swamps; also, half underground, walled up pits with a thatched saddle-roof and a mound of earth thrown against it, used by herders and herds. Then there are loam-covered huts of intertwined beech twigs and with a reed or leaf roofing (Figure 2); one-room houses with walls filled out with grass or pieces of turf with a flat roof frame-work consisting of three transverse beams and boards loosely laid over them and weighted down with rocks (Figure 3, which, furthermore, shows, next to the hut, a frame for storing meat, and so forth, with a notched tree stump serving as steps and a spruce tree serving as a natural hook for hanging things). The permanent dwellings, always fenced in; are log cabins in the forested region of the north; for the rest they are stone houses bound with mortar, in central and southern Albania with walled-in supporting beams, covered with straw, shingles, slate, planks, or furrowed tiles. Originally it was level with the ground, with one or two rooms, then it turned into a building with two or more stories, with or without a verandah. The perpetual insecurity of the country as a consequence of the of the blood revenge feuds developed tower-like fortified buildings (kulen), with embrasures and a solid roof difficult of access (Figure 1), out of bulletproof interior structures. The division into rooms in the interior of these buildings is rarely made by means of walls, more frequently just through boards or intertwined twigs, or sometimes even
[177] just through larger objects like chests. Into the urban building and
[93] decorative arts Italian-Venetian, Byzantine-Near Eastern, and Turkish influences have penetrated; the Scutari chest wall in Figure 13 shows a well-known pattern of Persian ornamentation with a tree of motif in the final state of degeneration. The interior of the houses has loam
352 floors or timber floors; wall boards for putting away things (Figure 8); wall pegs for hanging up dishes; tables in the shape of plates made of two half-moon-shaped boards joined together to form a circle, with

[See: Karutz, E1 Europe, cat. 116, p. 67a --- Analyst]

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Albania E61

# A Railway Line

As no-one but myself wanted to go on to Tirana I was put with the mails into an ordinary four-seater Ford car and continued the journey alone save for the driver. The country was well wooded with oak, ash, poplar, willow and alder. The fields were enclosed with hedges of bramble and, but for the big wild fig-trees, I might almost have been in England. I had been told that I should find in Albania no bank, no water-closet, and no railway, but as regards the railway I found this statement incorrect, for a narrow gauge track ran at the side of the road most of the way from Scutari to Tirana. It did not, however, appear to have been used for a considerable time as it was in bad repair and much broken. At one place, half-a-dozen little locomotives, dismantled and red with rust, stood idle on a siding, while in a ditch a short distance away lay a seventh—a pathetic corpse in a winding-sheet of bramble and convolvulus. Presumably the line was wrecked by the Austrians when they were in retreat at the end of the war. I should not imagine that it would be a very costly matter to put it into working order again.

The impression I received in the course of this drive was that the surrounding country was exceedingly fertile, and that much which is at present uncultivated could be made productive if modern agricultural methods were adopted. In all countries the farmer and tiller of the soil—conservative to the backbone—is slow to admit that his way of doing things can be bettered, and to this general rule the Albanian agriculturist is no exception. He knows nothing, and wants

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples I
Albania EGI



241 to know nothing, of new methods. I heard of one instance
181 in which a young and progressive Albanian of the wealthy
● classes (landowners who lease their land to the peasant in

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return for one-third of the crop) brought back with him from Western Europe some of the latest agricultural machinery, intending to start scientific farming. He at once found himself up against not only the conservatism of the peasant but the conventions of his class—no *gentleman*

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Albania EG1



soils his hands with work!—and in the end his project had to be abandoned. Since the wealth of every country comes in the first instance from the soil, this attitude of mind is to be deeply deplored. All possible means of making the soil more productive should be welcomed.

Tirana, the Albanian capital and seat of government, is not a particularly impressive place. Its chief claim to notice, politics apart, lies in its mosques, which are all very beautiful examples of old Byzantine architecture and decoration. The streets are of rough cobbles—very uncomfortable to the feet—and the houses are, for the most part, of one storey only. The shops are the rickety wooden boxes one expects to find in this part of the world, and their proprietors sit, in Turkish fashion, at the receipt of custom.

I lunched soon after my arrival at the Hotel Internationale, which is the centre of the political life of the place. It is frequented by the deputies and their friends, and discussion and argument go on all day long over the coffee-cup and the raki glass. While I was struggling with the menu, which was Greek to me, a lady, seeing my difficulty, spoke to me in English and offered her assistance. She was an American and we got into conversation. One of the first things she said was, " You will find plenty of English here ". I was astonished. That there was a British Legation at Durazzo I knew, but that Tirana contained "plenty of English " was news to me. Nor did it seem a place to attract the tourist. The meeting with the American did not surprise me so much, as I knew that there were American

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Albania EG1

# To the Land of the Eagle

ooo inn. We sat outside at a table under the vines like a family party, and were joined in true democratic fashion by the driver and the mechanic of the lorry. I thought with regret of the snobbish class-distinctions of my native land. How much happier we should be if only we could abolish them!

361 The Albanian countryside at this spot was but sparsely inhabited, and houses were few and far apart. The occasional villages were tumble-down and poverty-stricken. At one place the mosque had fallen into ruins—perhaps the result of an earthquake—and no one had troubled to build it up again.

● 181 The Albanian, like the Turk, is something of a fatalist. He is also lazy. Doubtless it was the will of Allah that the mosque should collapse—why, then, trouble to rebuild it?

825 The broken minaret was crowned with an enormous stork's-nest on which stood the owner clapping its long beak. The stork, being a sacred bird, was in no danger, having once established itself, of being disturbed or turned out of its home.

ooo Our way lay amongst mountains—soft green mountains with rounded outlines, very different in type from the jagged rocks of Montenegro. Their sides were splashed with the gold of broom and the yellow of sage, and with the purple of some wild-flower which grew in regular stripes in the crevices of out-cropping rock-strata. The air was scented and soft.

We travelled on for some hours without any incident beyond an occasional stoppage to tighten a bolt, to retrieve

241 a loose nut, or to do some minor repairs to the engine. At length the plain of Argyrocastron came into view—a wide, well-cultivated valley many miles in extent, where green

1 [near Argyrocastron-- 166 Analyst]

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Albania EG1



294 taking advantage of the felting properties of natural wool, to make anything so solid as the substance which resulted, nor had I realised before, that our own felt hats are made in a similar way, though I now presume that they are. Bit by bit the fez began to take shape. By holding it up to the light weak places were exposed. A little loose wool was added where needful and felted on with soap and "elbow grease" until the cap was of uniform thickness. Heavy pummelling with a wooden instrument completed this part of the manufacture, and the fez was placed on a wooden block and put in the sunshine to dry. Later on it would go to the man who wielded the razor and be trimmed to a smooth finish.

While I was in the shop a customer handed in his fez, which was no longer as clean as it had once been, and received a nice white one in exchange. This is the local custom and is analogous to the custom of the smart Londoner of Edwardian and Victorian times who always had two silk hats, one in wear, the other at the ironer's.

181 As we were unable to find any common means of communication, conversation languished until a young fellow came across the street from a shop opposite. He spoke English. After asking my business or profession—the customary first question—he put the equally familiar query, "What do you think of Albania?" To which I replied that I thought Albania a fine country, rich in natural resources and with great possibilities of development. The youth shook his head sadly. "Aye, yes", said he, "but it is so

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples . . .
Albania E61



poor. We have no money, no work. We want factories. We want the English to help us to build factories." It was the same complaint, though couched in slightly different terms, as that of the peasant at Koritza—"This country no goddamned good! No money, no work, no nothin'!" I was getting used to it.

"But", I exclaimed, "what on earth do you want factories for? These hats, for example—suppose a company started a factory here to make fezzes, they would turn out in a week as many fezzes as these people make in a year. The fez-makers would be thrown out of work and the market would be flooded."

The young man waved a deprecating hand. "Yes, yes", he said. "But we should export the hats to other countries and the foreign trade would make us rich."

The same old story—getting rich! getting rich! getting rich! I laughed, and asked him to put the case to the fez-maker. The man made some short answer and went on with his work.

"What does he say?" I demanded.

"He says", was the reply, "'We want no factories here'."

That evening—a Saturday and a market day—I stood on the long bridge which spans the river to the south of the town watching the stream of men, women, and children, returning to their homes in the distant villages. One strapping girl carried on her head a wooden cradle within which a baby was firmly bound with long strips of webbing.

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1



big courtyard gates, and having no windows to the street on the ground floor. Like all Oriental houses, they are only of two stories; the upper, which contains the living rooms of the family, being reached by an outside wooden staircase under cover of the broad pent of the roof projecting over the landing or gallery on which all the rooms open.

In more remote towns, such as Prisrend or Skodra, the streets look dreary and deserted in the extreme, besides being extremely narrow and ill-paved, if paved at all, and the bazaars and shops are exceedingly mean and poor. The furniture consists chiefly of a low divan with very hard cushions, a few chairs and a mirror, and the lime-washed walls are sometimes decorated with a dado representing a landscape, executed in the crudest possible style chiefly in one colour. A shelf often runs round the walls to hold the copper *ibriks* and other utensils, and above it are hung the rich assortment of arms which is the pride of every family.

In the mountain districts the houses of the beys are complete fortresses, being surrounded by high walls pierced with loopholes for musketry. Only in times of open hostility, however, is it necessary to take any precautions against possible foes, for an Albanian's notion of honour does not allow him to slay a man in his own house, deadly as may be his feud with him. The villages of these districts are generally remote from each other, perched in high and inaccessible situations. The furniture of the cottages is limited to a few mats and rugs, a *sofra*, the low stand on which meals are served in Turkish

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1



their young wives in charge of their parents. For with the Skipetars, as with the majority of Oriental peoples, patriarchal customs still survive, and all the sons bring home their brides to the paternal roof, there to remain in subjection to the parents-in-law until they shall themselves be heads of families.

The highest aspiration of an Albanian wife is to be the mother of boys, and she is less proud of her own beauty and the rank of her family than of the number of her sons and of their valour. The mother of many sons is sure of the lasting affection of her husband, enjoys the respect and consideration of the rest of his family, and wields great authority in the household to which she has come as a stranger. As they never permanently leave the paternal roof, she may look forward to their support and affection in her old age, and to see their children growing up around her. When her husband leaves his home for a sojourn at a distance, custom requires that she should manifest no grief at his departure. Instead of accompanying him to the threshold, and watching his familiar figure disappear in the distance, or going to meet him on his arrival, she hides herself at both the moment of his arrival and of his departure. A woman's tears or joy, they say, must not soften a man's heart when his duty lies before him. Neither must they ask for news of them at any time during their absence. Yet in the depth of their hearts no wives more regret the absence of their husbands, as the touching little superstitious observances with which they console themselves testify. Unknown to their partners, they sew in their clothes

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

## CHAPTER IX.

### ALBANIAN WOMEN: THEIR FAMILY CEREMONIES.

562 184 THE domestic usages of the Albanians vary slightly, according to locality and religion, but are, in their main features, identical. And though the customs surrounding such family ceremonies as births, marriages, and deaths belong naturally more to the domain of women than of men, the latter are not less scrupulous in the fulfilment of the part in these observances which fall to their share.

156 181 Tribal and family pride being, as has been already seen, the leading feature of Albanian character, the desire of offspring, and especially male offspring, is naturally very strong with them. A childless man [554] is designated by an expression which signifies "without a root," and is looked upon as a most unfortunate [754] being. The wish, "May you be childless!" is also considered the most weighty curse that can be launched against a man by his enemy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dearest wish of every woman's heart is consequently to be the mother of a numerous family of boys, both for the sake of the future prosperity of the tribe and for the present social consideration which their birth ensures to her. 843 When the fact that an Albanian woman is about to

6: Shutter S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
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# 7 ALBANIAN INTERLUDE AND BALTIC VISTA

## I

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●181 LITTLE ALBANIA, where mountains rise in serried ranks behind a marshy, malaria-infested coast, was perhaps the first satellite to reveal the nature of Communist rule fully and unreservedly. Living uneasily under Turkish domination well past the nineteenth century in a country not unlike the Great Smokies, the Albanians have been the least known and the most handicapped nation in Europe. Like many a mountain folk in the United States—whether in Tennessee or in Vermont—they have been influenced culturally by the inaccessibility of their villages, the primitive state of their agriculture, and the dearth of modern means of transportation. Even proximity to the sea has been of limited value because delta silt has impeded navigation throughout history. Outside the cities, family and tribal solidarity remains stronger than national sentiment. But, while the Albanians have been dependent on foreign powers for security and prosperity, they are a patriotic folk and a martial one.

291 trousers, the shape of his cap, and particularly by the design on his stockings. If after 6 months a foreigner had reached this threshold of discrimination, a native mountaineer with good eyesight could identify a stranger as far as he could see him, just as easily as a modern boy can tell the make of a car or airplane at a glance. This habit of wearing one's insignia so conspicuously has a very definite meaning. The man is proud of his family and native place, and defiant. His desire to be identified is greater than his fear of death. He does not go far from home unless his mission is a serious one.

[181]

The man's costume starts with a brimless felt cap (*frontispiece*)[1] either conical or flat on top; often he wears a kerchief around it like a thin turban, or neckcloth. The upper part of his body is covered with a woolen jacket, with sleeves and some kind of collar, often sailor-fashion. As a rule he is shirtless. From waist to ankle he wears a pair of woolen breeches, usually skin-tight on the legs, and with a slight fullness in the seat in some regions which reflects the influence of the Turkish baggy pants. He goes without underdrawers. If wealthy, he may also wear an ornate sleeveless waistcoat. He usually sports some kind of wide cummerbund, or belt. His feet are shod in opingas, or rawhide buskins, the common primitive European footgear found not only in the Balkans but in Russia, Ireland, and other places where tradition is strong enough and shoes expensive enough to preserve this ancient homemade shoe type. In 1929 the poorer Ghegs were wearing pieces of automobile tire in place of opingas, and it gave one a start to see a fresh section of Goodyear or Michelin track on a mountain path 18 inches wide. At the same time the wealthier were wearing western manufactured shoes.

Both men and women wear stockings, knit by the women, which bear the family design as clearly as a Scottish tartan. I have seen many men, however, who had none. The women's dress varies from place to place, but is basically a combination of a full bell-like skirt, reminding one of a Cretan goddess's lower garment, surmounted by a full blouse or bodice. Add to that a headcloth or shawl, and much jewelry,

[See cat. 16, facing the page --Analyst]

[1] This is confirmed by Bishop Fan Noli.

197 this once widely spoken group. G. S. Lowman[6] says of it,

> "The Albanian language constitutes a distinct branch in the Satem division of the Indo-European languages. It is the direct descendant of the ancient Illyrian of Roman times, together with some Thracian influences. . . . At the present time, two principal dialectal divisions exist, Geg or Northern, and Tosk or Southern, which are more or less mutually intelligible. . . .
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> "In the course of Albanian history many foreign influences have come to play their part in making the language what it is today. Although the essential structure of the language, and a fair share of the words in common use are of native origin, the vocabulary has been borrowed from outside sources to a far greater extent even than is the case of English. In 1891 Gustav Meyer stated in his etymological dictionary that of 5,140 root-words only 400 were of the original Albanian stock, that 1,420 were Romance, 540 Slavonic, 1,180 Turkish, 840 Greek, and over 700 indeterminable. Later scholars, however, have proved that a considerably larger proportion of words are truly Albanian."

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181 Such careful observers of material culture as Nopcsa and Haberlandt have concluded that *the Ghegs*, in their tools, agricultural implements, furniture, costumes, and most other technological details *are still living in the Hallstatt Iron Age.*

174 A single conclusion is therefore as legitimate as it is obvious. *The mountains of Ghegnia were first effectively populated during the middle centuries of the first millennium before Christ.* The pioneers who took over this rugged landscape were Illyrians, whose central territory lay to the northwest. Since they had already lived in Bosnia and Montenegro, they were already adjusted to life in this environment.

172 Fortunately, the materials excavated at Glasinac,[7] the type site of the Illyrian Hallstatt culture, include skeletons as well as artifacts. The date of this cemetery is between 1000 and 500 B.C. The collection of 38 crania shows clearly that the Illyrians were not a homogeneous people in the racial sense. The majority of the skulls are long headed, and represent at least 2 contemporary varieties of Nordic. This is not surprising since most of the Iron Age

[7 See cat. 116, p. 40 b.--Analyst]

[6] Lowman, 1932, p. 271.